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Senate Passes Landfill Inspections Bill

LANSING – The Michigan Senate today passed legislation to authorize a statewide landfill inspection program. Senate Bill 499, sponsored by Senator Alan Sanborn, (R) Richmond, is part of a 14-bill package that would impose tighter restrictions on solid waste disposal in Michigan.

“Solid waste regulation is a matter of great concern to the citizens of southeast Michigan, and the entire state,” said Senator Alan Sanborn. “Be assured that the Michigan Legislature will continue to seek ways to carry out its constitutionally mandated roles as stewards of the states precious natural resources.”

The bill authorizes the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to establish a statewide inspection program. The DEQ is then charged with administering the solid waste program in an effort to do all of the following:

1. Assure that all disposal areas are in full compliance.
2. Provide for the inspection of each solid waste disposal area for compliance at least four times a year.
3. Assure that all persons disposing of solid waste are doing so in compliance.

Also, as part of the statewide inspection program, the DEQ may conduct regular, random inspections at landfills.

Other key provisions in the package include:

- Starting Oct. 1, 2004, landfills would be required to refuse waste, regardless of its source, that did not meet Michigan’s stringent waste standards.
- Adds two important new landfill bans—beverage containers and whole tires—to further reduce reliance on landfills and encourage recycling.
- Grants the DEQ director emergency power to prohibit any waste shipment that poses a threat to the public’s health or safety or to the safety of the environment.
- Adds new fines, of up to \$25,000 per day, for violating certain laws related to disposing of waste in landfills.
- Mandates a 2-year moratorium on issuing certain new landfill permits.
- Two resolutions urge Congress to act to allow states to control the flow and deposit of out-of-state waste.

The entire package was unanimously recommended by the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs earlier this week. SB 499 now goes to the House for consideration.